

**Security Council**

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Identical letters dated 24 July 2017 from the Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

On instructions from my Government, I should like to convey to you the position of the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic regarding the forty-first report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014), 2191 (2014), 2258 (2015) and 2332 (2016) (S/2017/623).

The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic reiterates the concerns that it raised in its previous responses to reports of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the aforementioned Security Council resolutions.

The Syrian Government notes the relative improvement in the drafting of the current report, although it still falls short of the level required to demonstrate that the authors are credible, professional and objective. The report still fails to address in a serious manner the real reasons for the decline in the living standards and humanitarian situation of Syrians, including the terrorism that has been supported by well-known regimes and Governments from the region and beyond, the unilateral coercive economic measures imposed on the Syrian people by the United States of America, the European Union and other States, and interference by certain regional and international actors in Syrian affairs, with a view to prolonging the crisis and obstructing efforts to arrive at a peaceful political resolution through the Syrian-led political process that the United Nations has repeatedly endorsed.

The authors of the report acknowledge that the "Government continued to provide basic services to areas under its control and in many areas beyond its control". They furthermore acknowledge that the Syrian Government had approved the opening of the land route to Qamishli and note that this action would reduce costs substantially. However, the authors fail to acknowledge that it was the counter-terrorism efforts of the Syrian State and its forces that had made it possible to open that route and use it to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian assistance. Moreover, the authors ignore the facilitation of the Syrian State and its institutions and the great efforts that they have been making to assist international organizations engaged in humanitarian work in the Syrian Arab Republic. Instead, the authors continue to pursue their systematic policy of making accusations.

The Syrian Government stresses that it alone is authorized to ensure the safety and security of Syrians and to protect them. It has a constitutional duty under national legislation and international law to fight the terrorism of Islamic State in



Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and the Nusrah Front and associated entities and terrorist individuals with numerous names and allegiances. Countering terrorism is essential to restoring security and stability, increasing the amount of assistance delivered and improving the humanitarian situation and living conditions of Syrians.

The Syrian Government reiterates that in the course of carrying out its counter-terrorism efforts, it has complied fully with the provisions of international law and international humanitarian law, particularly with regard to ensuring the security and safety of civilians and civilian facilities and objects, such as hospitals and schools. The Government is committed to international humanitarian law, which it seeks to disseminate and enforce. It has therefore strengthened the role of the Syrian National Committee on International Humanitarian Law and has organized numerous national activities and training sessions on international humanitarian law.

The Syrian Government is committed to the cessation of hostilities agreement that entered into force on 30 December 2016. The armed terrorist groups have not complied with that agreement at the behest of the radical governments of the region that support and finance them. As a result, hundreds of Syrians continue to be killed and injured.

The Syrian Government rejects the erroneous political messages and claims that the authors of the report put forward in order to accuse the Syrian Government of besieging or deliberately preventing aid from reaching parts of Syria. The Syrian Government stresses that national reconciliation agreements, such as those that were implemented in the Wa'r neighbourhood of Homs and other parts of Syria, have ended the suffering of thousands of civilians who had been used as human shields for years by armed terrorist groups and have contributed substantially to the reconstruction and improvement of service facilities. Those agreements protected the rights of the neighbourhoods' residents, civilians and armed individuals alike, who were given the choice of remaining in their neighbourhoods or heading for other areas. Indeed, hundreds of persons who had chosen to leave their areas returned to them, choosing to live under the protection of the Syrian State and return to their normal lives.

The report includes a list of 11 besieged areas. Upon reviewing that list, it is clear that it is the armed terrorist groups and their supporters who are responsible for besieging those areas, whether the siege is laid from outside those areas or from within. That list also demonstrates how the work of the United Nations and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) has been politicized. The suffering of the people of the besieged cities of Fu'ah and Kafraya at the hands of terrorist groups and their urgent need for assistance is completely ignored. Meanwhile, United Nations agencies have not taken any steps to deliver humanitarian assistance to them.

The Syrian Government rejects the erroneous accounts in the report of the aerial bombardment of health and educational facilities in southern Syria. The information on which those accounts are based is unreliable and the aim here is to level accusations against the Syrian Government.

The Syrian Government is disappointed that the authors of the report simply provide an account of the incident in which American aircraft downed a Syrian aircraft in Raqqah governorate, instead of describing it as an unjustified hostile action. Their failure to do so is all the more disappointing because the Syrian aircraft that was attacked was carrying out its duty to combat the ISIL terrorist organization.

The Government emphasizes that the authors of the report must use credible information sources and should refrain from relying on information provided by

"open sources", the sole aim of which is to malign the Syrian Government and wipe clean the ledger of the terrorist groups and their backers.

The Syrian Government reiterates that it rejects the authors' continued use of non-legal terminology and characterizations. For instance, the Secretariat refers to armed terrorist groups as "non-State armed opposition", despite understanding full well that those groups are connected with the terrorist groups ISIL and the Nusrah Front. Their conduct in that regard distorts reality and violates United Nations resolutions on combating terrorism.

The Syrian Government finds it deplorable that the authors have continued to promote the operations of the "international coalition" while deliberately ignoring the reality that the coalition has no legitimacy, that the Syrian Government never asked for it, and that the Security Council never authorized it. They also fail to mention the consequences of the coalition's acts of aggression, which have claimed the lives of thousands of innocent civilians and wreaked horrific damage on the infrastructure, including dams, bridges, hospitals, schools and oil wells. One of the most recent tragic examples of the coalition's criminal conduct occurred on 3 June 2017 when coalition aircraft bombed the Jamili Building in Raqqah city, killing at least 43 civilians, the majority of whom were children and women, and injuring dozens of others.

The Government finds it regrettable that the Secretariat fails to mention in its report the acts of aggression being committed by the Turkish regime and attempts to legitimize the actions of that regime and its allies in Syria, although those actions constitute a blatant attack against the sovereignty and territorial unity and integrity of the Syrian Arab Republic and a flagrant violation of international law and the Charter of the United Nations, and despite the fact that the regime is directly involved in supporting terrorism and prolonging the crisis.

The Syrian Government is disappointed that the authors relay a number of claims and accusations that have been levelled against it with regard to procedural and logistical matters related to the delivery of humanitarian assistance to unstable areas. It has facilitated the delivery of such assistance in every possible way, so long as the assistance is intended for Syrian civilians in need and its delivery is arranged for in accordance with the applicable Syrian laws and regulations.

The Syrian Government reiterates that it has approved most of the individual requests that the World Health Organization (WHO) has made to send assistance to various parts of Syria. Since the start of 2017, WHO has received authorizations to send assistance to the following areas: Adra al-Ummaliyah, the Assad suburb, Dayr Ali, Jabal al-Ward, Manin, Qastal, Badda, Rawdah, Sa'sa', Talfita, Bludan, Eastern Ghutah, Wadi Barada, Ayn al-Fijah, Qadsayya and Duma in Rif Dimashq governorate; Musaymah, Qunayyah and Khabab in Dar'a governorate; Qamishli in Hasakah governorate; and Mayadin in Dayr al-Zawr governorate. The Government has also approved a number of other requests made directly by WHO to deliver assistance to specific areas by means of its convoys operating as part of the inter-agency convoys. Contrary to the claims made in paragraph 24 of the report, the Syrian Government regularly approves the importation of medical supplies by inter-agency convoys, as well as requests submitted by United Nations organizations working in Syria. The Syrian Government has also been responding to requests to evacuate patients from areas described by the United Nations as "besieged or hard-to-reach", who are then transferred to Government hospitals to receive the necessary treatment. Last week, three children were taken out of Eastern Ghutah so that they could be treated at medical facilities in Damascus.

The Syrian Government finds it deplorable that OCHA officials have been remiss in making arrangements for convoys. They have focused exclusively on

areas that already receive monthly assistance, and have provided inaccurate figures regarding the number of convoys dispatched per month and the number of areas that are reached, in order to diminish the efforts of the Syrian Government.

The Syrian Government stresses that the figures provided by OCHA regarding humanitarian convoys are incorrect. Since the start 2017, some 48 humanitarian assistance convoys were dispatched to the following areas: Mu'addamiyah (7 January), eastern Mu'addamiyah (8 January), Tall (11 January), Dumayr (25 January), Talbisah (5 February), Rastan (12 February), Afrin (13 February), Ruhaybah (15 February), Dumayr (2 March), Rawdah and Zabadani (6 March), the Duma area and nearby towns (9 March), Sanamayn, Dayr al-Bukht and Muthabin (14 March), Fu'ah and Kafra (14 March), Madaya and Zabadani (14 March), Wadi Barada (24 March), Talbisah (28 March), Bludan (28 March), Rastan (30 March), Khan al-Shih (30 March), Yalda, Babila and Bayt Saham (8 April), Hulah (13 April), Harbinafsih, Aqrah, Tallaf and Khirbat al-Jami' (13 April), Tall Rif'at, Raju, Afrin, Kafr Jannah and Yakhur (14 April), Madaya and Buqayn (19 April), Dar al-Kabirah, Ghantu and Tayr Ma'lah (20 April), the Yarmouk camp (23 April), Duma and nearby towns (2 May), Wadi Barada, Barhila, Kafr al-Awamid, Suq Wadi Barada, Afrah, Dayr Muqrin, Dayr Qanun, Ayn al-Fijah, Hasaniyah and Kufayr al-Zayt (6 May), Kanakir (10 May), Qabun (16 May), Dumayr (20 May), Rastan (22 May), Jayrud, Nasiriyah and Atanah (22 May), Hulah (23 May), Ghantu, Tayr Ma'lah and Dar al-Kabirah (24 May), Qal'at al-Madiq (25 May), Kafr Zayta (25 May), Ruhaybah (3 June), Tall Rif'at, Raju, Afrin, Kafr Jannah and Yakhur (5 June), Barzah (9 June), Talbisah and Tulul al-Humr (15 June), eastern Harasta (19 June), Qabun (20 June), Rastan and surrounding areas (22 June), Yalda, Babila and Bayt Saham (8 July), Hulah (15 July) and Harbinafsih (15 July). Some 412,580 families, that is to say more than 2 million persons, have received assistance.

The delay in dispatching certain convoys has been caused by the security situation in target areas and by the actions of armed terrorist groups and the fighting that has been going on among them. The terrorists groups have prevented convoys from entering, not allowed mines to be removed from the road and failed to agree on crossings. The convoys have been prevented from moving in order to ensure the safety and security of their personnel.

The Syrian Government stresses that the authors of the report and United Nations agencies operating in Syria must address the question of delivery of humanitarian aid in a precise and unbiased manner. We note that certain United Nations agencies are exaggerating needs in certain areas and requesting delivery of vast quantities of aid that are greatly out of line with the number of beneficiaries and their needs. Meanwhile, those same agencies deliver little or no assistance at all to other areas. Such conduct has, in several cases, led to waste of effort and funds, and allowed the goods being delivered to spoil and exceed their expiration date.

The Government reiterates that the United Nations must fully respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Syrian Arab Republic and should not pay heed or bow to the demands of other actors, such as the "local authorities" that the authors mention. The Organization must also not take any measures that could under any circumstances be interpreted as recognition of or legitimizing such actors.

The Syrian Government finds it deplorable that the Secretariat has once again failed to mention the economic, social, humanitarian, and medical suffering borne by the Syrian people as a result of the ongoing unilateral coercive economic measures imposed by the United States of America, the European Union and other States against such sectors as health, electricity, energy, trade, finance and transfer of funds, which are vital to the survival of the Syrian people and relief operations.

The Government stresses that by continuing to ignore this fundamental issue, the authors of the report will have to bear the responsibility of covering up the actions of States that, by imposing the above-mentioned measures, violate the Charter of the United Nations and the Organization's relevant resolutions. We remind you that monitoring the effects of such measures on the standard of living in and the prosperity of targeted States is one of the obligations imposed on the United Nations by the relevant General Assembly resolutions.

The Government is surprised that the authors continue to include incorrect information in the reports. It therefore reaffirms that it has granted approval for 26 international non-governmental organizations (not 22, as stated in the report) to carry out humanitarian and relief work in Syria. Those organizations are given the assistance they need to carry out their work in accordance with the legislation and regulations in force in the Syrian Arab Republic. Moreover, the Government approved 90 applications for renewal of visas (not 54, as stated in the report). The Syrian Government also granted hundreds of entry visas to employees of the International Committee of the Red Cross and other international governmental and non-governmental organizations.

The Syrian Government rejects the Secretariat's continual promotion of cross-border assistance, and reiterates that such assistance is ineffective, given that most of it falls into the hands of armed terrorist groups deployed in the targeted areas. The notifications sent to the Syrian Government do not meet the minimum standard of credibility with regard to figures, data, number of beneficiaries and information on the parties that receive and distribute assistance to civilian beneficiaries.

The Syrian Government reiterates that the United Nations Monitoring Mechanism for the Syrian Arab Republic cannot carry out its duty. In fact, it is not capable, to date, of verifying that cross-border assistance is reaching its rightful beneficiaries. We remind you that the Bab al-Hawa, Bab al-Salamah and Ramtha crossings are also entry points for arms, materiel and ammunition being smuggled to armed terrorist groups in Syria. The Government strongly rejects the authors' continued bias in favour of Turkey and Jordan when discussing the delivery of cross-border assistance. It reiterates that the Syrian Arab Red Crescent stands ready to monitor the delivery of humanitarian assistance to its intended recipients, but the Secretariat has in the past rejected that proposal.

The Syrian Government reiterates its stated position regarding the International Criminal Court and the calls that have been made to refer the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic to that Court, and stresses that the Court is not competent to address the situation in Syria. Moreover, the Court has lost all credibility and has been transformed into a political tool that is used by certain parties to attack specific States for sordid political ends that have nothing to do with the requirements of justice. The Government also reiterates the substance of the letter that it sent to the Secretary-General (A/71/799) regarding the serious legal flaws in General Assembly resolution 71/248 concerning the establishment of an International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism to Assist in the Investigation and Prosecution of Persons Responsible for the Most Serious Crimes under International Law Committed in the Syrian Arab Republic since March 2011.

The Syrian Government regrets that the report does not call for action that would help to improve the situation in Syria, in particular the humanitarian situation. The Secretariat should frankly and clearly call on the regimes of Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Turkey and other countries to refrain from supporting terrorism in Syria, frankly call on the European Union, the United States of America and other States to lift the unilateral coercive economic measures imposed on Syria and call for those regimes that support terrorism and seek to undermine the foundations of a

political solution, prolong the crisis and drain Syria to be held accountable for their actions.

The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic reaffirms its long-standing position that the crisis in Syria requires a political solution based on intra-Syrian dialogue under Syrian leadership without foreign intervention and without preconditions. It reminds the Secretariat that the success of the political process and any significant improvement in the humanitarian situation will depend, above all, on creating a climate conducive to a serious and non-politicized international and regional commitment to fighting terrorism in Syria and on an immediate end to the unilateral coercive economic measures being imposed on the Syrian people. The Syrian Government has played a constructive role in the success of the Astana and Geneva meetings.

The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic once again calls on the Security Council to compel the States that support and finance armed terrorist groups to stop providing such groups with any form of support or financing, in implementation of the relevant Security Council resolutions on combating terrorism and the financing thereof, in particular resolutions 2170 (2014), 2178 (2014), 2199 (2015) and 2253 (2015). Compliance with and enforcement of those resolutions is the key to resolving the situation in Syria and delivering unprecedented humanitarian assistance to those in need.

I should be grateful if the present letter could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) **Bashar Ja'afari**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative